

Patricia Beneke, Assistant Secretary – Water and Science

This is a tremendously exciting time to be at the Interior Department—a time of Restoration. At Water and Science, in particular, we are lucky enough to be in the thick of a series of efforts to restore unique and priceless natural landscapes around the nation.

Secretary Babbitt and others have pioneered a new model for restoring landscapes. Unlike previous efforts, this restoration model seeks not simply to conserve a few special places or prevent further environmental damage but actually to repair and restore entire landscapes, bringing them closer to their natural state. This restoration ethic emphasizes the interconnectedness of ecosystems, attempting to look, for example, at entire watersheds instead of dividing landscapes with arbitrary boundaries.

In the coming years, I see Water and Science, which oversees both the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey, continuing its work on major restoration initiatives around the nation. Each effort is at a different phase and each will follow its unique path. But a common factor will be lessons we've learned that can subsequently be applied to other restoration efforts. I believe this work has and will continue to showcase the Department's goal of approaching restoration in a manner that blends a wide array of interests—local, state, federal, tribal, and stakeholder.

In California, the CalFed Bay-Delta effort, involving state and federal agencies working with urban and agricultural users and environmentalists, is expected to make significant progress in the next several years. This effort involves pioneering work on a host of complex water issues, including improved through-Delta conveyance, water transfers, groundwater storage and other innovative techniques to help make the most of California's water for environmental and human consumption.



Restoration of the central Platte River and McNoughton Lake, above, will assist in the recovery of habitat for the sandhill cranes, a migratory bird species critically dependent on the Platte's wetlands.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AS THE FUTURE



Bald Cypress by Ryan Hagerty, FWS. Environmental restoration as the future is exemplified by the Department's commitment to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Project and other major efforts around the nation that are working to repair and reestablish watershed and landscape systems, bringing them closer to the natural state.

partnerships with state, tribal, and local governments to improve species recovery on the Missouri River. It seems especially important that we redouble our restoration efforts on the Missouri so that by 2003, the river will better resemble the waters which carried Lewis and Clark westward 200 years before.

Water and Science will continue the advancement of integrated and objective science in support of the management responsibilities of the Department's natural resources. Working with the U.S. Geological Survey, we will approach the study of natural resources on an ecosystem-wide or watershed basis. We want to lead the effort in changing the thinking behind managing natural resources. We must look beyond the traditional boundaries drawn on a map and manage in response to the pattern of the natural system.

Of course, sometimes, as we discuss the difficult, detailed work of environmental restoration, it is easy to sound technical and dry. I must assure you that the results of our work are anything but. Just take a trip to the vast beauty of the Everglades, go watch the migration of sandhill cranes on the Platte, peer into the streams of California to see recovering salmon—do this and you will discover, as I have, that our work is about helping to restore our nation's unique and magnificent natural places.



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Indeed, these are exciting times. In this, the 150th anniversary year of the Department, I take pride in the decades of accomplishment in our water and science related endeavors. But I am even more excited by the future prospect of what we can achieve in these areas as we begin a new chapter of the Department's history in the 21st century.

